

**Decoding the 'Wen-Wu' Paradigm: The Legitimization of Anti-Feminist
Discourse on Chinese Social Media**

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Elliot Yang Yang

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Prof. Dr. Arul Al Chib

Dr. Silke S Heumann

The Hague, The Netherlands

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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>
twitter: [@issnl](https://twitter.com/issnl)

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the encounters and drifts of anti-feminist discourses in digital space in both global and local Chinese contexts, while focusing on the power dynamics that shape the legitimization of anti-feminist discourses. At the same time, this study mobilises the local 'Wen-Wu' paradigm perspective combined with CDA as a methodological approach, and attempts to locate the technological power of the discourses in question by comparing the global and Chinese contexts.

Relevance to Development Studies

The polarisation of social media also reveals the polarisation of discussions related to gender issues today, while attacks on feminists continue to harass, defame, and attack the online and offline lives of feminists in different forms. I would like to reiterate the challenge of coordinated mobilisation and closer investigation of international and local contexts to address this urgent development issue. The "trolls" of social media are disrupting gender equality in both global and localised ways, and with the development of information technology and the construction of digital spaces, this is an issue that we need to consider urgently.

Keywords

Anti-feminism, social media, weibo, discourse analysis, China.

1. Introduction

1.1. Opening Statement

In the global landscape of feminist movements, the phenomenon of increasingly blurred lines between misogyny and anti-feminism presents a pervasive challenge transcending cultures and nations. Within this global discourse, the #MeToo movement in China, exemplified by cases like Xianzi and Zhu Jun, emerges as a singular case study. My research delves into the narratives opposing feminism in China, employing a critical reinterpretation of the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm. This approach aims to dissect the complex interplay of language, power, and gender norms within the Chinese socio-cultural milieu, setting the stage for a detailed exploration of these dynamics in the subsequent chapters. I will introduce the Feminist movements online and the backlash, #Metoo movement in China, the Weibo platform and the case of Xianzi and Zhujun to facilitate understanding of the study.

1.1.1. Feminist movements online and the backlash

Social media has undoubtedly redefined the perception of feminism as an active component in today's society globally (Dixon, 2014). Hashtag feminism has created spaces where victims of inequality can coexist and share their pain, narratives, and isolation. Cultivating safe, inclusive spaces to promote free and open expression remains a key political priority for feminist organizations in the digital media era. The digital presence of feminist bloggers is enduring, replicable, searchable, and often allows participants to remain invisible to each other (Keller, 2016). Due to its networked nature, online feminist counterpublics also have a greater capacity for growth, which in turn amplifies their ability to intervene in broader public spheres. Digital platforms have indeed created new forms of feminist expression and radicalism, simultaneously increasing visibility and political participation. However, the extent to which online feminist practices can promote offline politics remains a subject of controversy. Meanwhile, due to the ongoing existence of patriarchy and gender inequality, women frequently suffer from misogyny, violence, and threats online (Evan & Riley, 2020). The evolution of digital culture and interactivity in social media has fostered online misogyny, and as the boundaries between misogyny and anti-feminism become increasingly blurred, a new generation of anti-feminists has adopted a highly personalized political style, often failing to distinguish between feminists and women (Ging, 2019). Thus, the relationship between misogyny and anti-feminism continues to disrupt the development of the global feminist movement. At the same time, radical misogyny shaped by the rise of right-wing masculinists is hindering the growth of the digital feminist movement (Greig, 2019). These toxic masculinities seek to re-establish the patriarchal order, signalling a global misogyny that undervalues, distorts and actively opposes women (Cockerill, 2019).

1.1.2. China's #MeToo Movement

In a similar vein, the rise of the #MeToo movement in China represents a specific manifestation of these global feminist dynamics, intertwined with unique challenges posed by local socio-political contexts. The Internet and social media have facilitated new modes of expression, networking, and practices among feminist activism and movements in different contexts, including China (Baer, 2016; Clark-Parsons, 2018; Elsadda, 2010; Salter, 2013; Travers, 2003). Similar to the four waves of feminist movements around the world today, China's feminist movement has also been influenced by digital media. In recent years, the "#MeToo" movement¹ has continued to provide the Chinese feminist movement with a steady stream of participation and visibility in a decentralized manner from its inception in China in 2018 until now (Lin & Yang, 2019; Yin, Sun, 2021; Zeng, 2020). Since 2018, the #MeToo movement has spanned various sectors, including education, philanthropy, media, religion, literature, sports, music, and politics. The first case of the #MeToo movement in China occurred in 2018 (Han & Liu, 2023). Luo Qianqian, a doctoral graduate of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (BUAA), publicly accused Chen Xiaowu, a professor at BUAA, of sexually harassing her 12 years ago during her doctoral studies (Manya, 2018). She also reported that Chen had sexually harassed several female students under his guidance over the years. Following these revelations, Chen Xiaowu was suspended. The contrast between the predators' fame and their misconduct made the cases eye-catching and newsworthy. The expectation of overdue justice to be sanctioned motivated widespread interest and participation in the anti-sexual harassment deliberation and campaigns (Yin & Sun, 2020).

The legal framework has also developed as a result of the #MeToo movement in China (Han, 2021). In 2019, the case of Liu Li suing Liu Mengcai confirmed 'sexual harassment damage dispute' as a new civil action, marking a legal milestone. Despite varying degrees of impediments, legal reforms in China have been advancing. The Civil Code², implemented in 2021, has specified standards for recognizing sexual harassment and detailed scenarios of personal privacy infringement (NPC Observer, 2020). Moreover, the 2022 amendment to the Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law³ has improved

¹ The 'me too.' Movement: Founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke to support survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of color from low-wealth communities, to find pathways to healing. The movement's vision from the beginning has been to address both the dearth of resources for survivors of sexual violence and to build a robust community of advocates and allies. In October 2017, the movement went global as the #MeToo hashtag went viral and survivors across the world came forward about their experiences with sexual assault.

<https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/me-too/>

² The Civil Code: The first Chinese law to carry the title "code" since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Civil Code is expected to comprehensively strengthen the protection of people's various rights and improve the Chinese socialist system of laws. It will take effect on Jan 1, 2021.

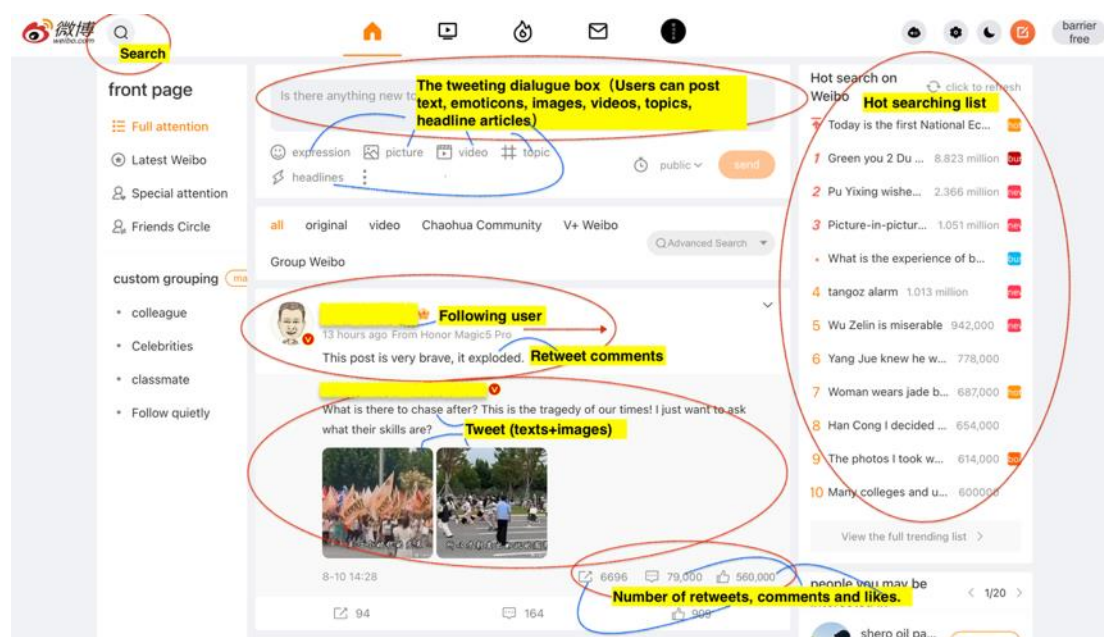
https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/lawsregulations/202012/31/content_WS5fedad98c6d0f72576943005.html

³ The Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law: Chinese lawmakers have voted to

protective measures and developed systems to prevent and address sexual harassment and assault, thereby significantly enhancing the protection of women's rights (Library of Congress, 2023). However, challenges persist in obtaining legal redress, with victims often facing hurdles in evidence gathering and legal proceedings (Wang, Yu, 2022).

1.1.3. Weibo platform

After exploring the broader global context of feminist movements online and the specific challenges and developments within China's #MeToo movement, it becomes crucial to examine the role of specific digital platforms in facilitating and shaping these movements. "Weibo is a microblogging application, launched by Sina Corporation⁴ in 2009, based on user relationships to share, disseminate and get information. As of Q4 2019, it has over 516 million monthly active users (compared to Twitter's 300 million), making it only the second largest social media platform in China after WeChat" (Hu, 2020). "With eight times more users than Twitter, Sina Weibo is more of a Facebook-Twitter hybrid than a pure Twitter clone" (Yang, et al., 2012). In this site (Image 1), users can post tweets (text, images, videos, topics, headline articles, etc.) and can set them to be viewable by individuals, people who follow each other, and all people.



adopt a revised law to better protect women's rights and interests in areas such as education, employment, property distribution, and personal rights. The newly-revised Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, passed at the closing meeting of a session of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, will take effect in 2023. http://en.moj.gov.cn/2022-11/01/c_826086.htm

⁴ Sina Corporation: An online media company and MVAS provider in the people's republic of china and for the global Chinese communities. <https://www.crunchbase.com/organization/sina>

Image 1 – Weibo Site
Screen shot

Censorship is common on the Chinese Internet and also applies to Weibo, which was developed by the hosting company Sina. Sina is required to comply with government requirements and regulations (Canaves, 2011; Hui & Rajagopalan, 2013). Sina therefore takes a proactive approach to censoring content: on the one hand, blacklists containing links or keywords are used to automatically block certain content from being published, or delay it until Sina approves it (Bamman et al., 2012; Fu et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2013). On the other hand, Sina employs a large number of human moderators to scan and remove potentially problematic content (Hui & Rajagopalan, 2013), or to hide posts from all users except the author of the post (Zhu et al., 2013). Sina juggles commercial interests with party-state regulations (Roberts & Hall, 2011). This creates both an opportunity and a challenge to shape the network's space for open discussion (Jiang, 2010; Noesselt, 2014; Sullivan, 2013; Xiao, 2011; Yang, 2011).

Among the different social platforms, Weibo has become an important platform for many feminists and related organisations to participate in the digital feminist movement due to its wide audience (Wang & Ouyang, 2023). The Chinese feminist movement has also participated in the global #Metoo movement, and has continued to post a large number of ideas about gender equality on Weibo. But because the development of feminist movements has also been limited by the state's ideology due to the continued suppression of civil society under the authoritarian rule of the Chinese Communist Party in recent years (Yin & Sun, 2023). This has led to the discussion of 'feminist' related issues on the platform. 'feminism has become a sensitive term, not only because of its 'Western grounding', but also because it is strongly associated with social or political change' (Huang, 2022) which "can pose potential threats to China's political stability" (Han, 2018).

1.2. The case of Xianzi and Zhu Jun

The discussion on the role of platforms like Weibo in shaping feminist discourse in China, the case of Xianzi (Image 2) and Zhu Jun (Image 3) emerges as a seminal example. The case of Xianzi and Zhu Jun" is one of the prominent cases in China's #Metoo movement in recent years (Bao, 2023; Gu & Heemsbergen, 2023; Huang, 2023; Liu, 2021; Wang, 2023; Wang & Ouyang). Xianzi revealed in 2018 that one of the most famous CCTV hosts, Jun Zhu, had molested her when she was an intern 4 years ago. Her experience was first posted on her WeChat circle of friends, and then seen by Classmate Maishao ⁵(real name Xu Chao), who gave her permission to post it on Weibo. In the same year, Xianzi filed a lawsuit against Zhu Jun for a general personality rights dispute. Zhu Jun also countersued Xianzi and Classmate Maishao in a reputation lawsuit. This case raised attention rapidly and generated heated debate from the public (Table 1). The case went through 5 years from

⁵ Classmate Maishao: Real name is Xu Chao, Whistleblower in the Zhu Jun case, while being sued by Zhu Jun. <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/10/xianzi-classmate-maishao-metoo-makes-us-believe-gentleness-can-change-the-world/>

2018-2023.



Image 2 Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan
Photograph: Noel Celis/AFP/Getty Images
The Guardian



Image 3 Zhu Jun
CHINA STRINGER NETWORK/REUTERS
The New York Times

Xianzi accused Zhu Jun of committing lewd acts in a tweet via her friend Xu Chao (26 July 2018)



Zhu Jun's commissioned lawyer issues statement denying molestation (15 August 2018)



Xianzi's case against Zhu Jun accepted by Beijing Haidian District People's Court (25 October 2018)



Zhu Jun's request to the court to terminate the trial was rejected by the Haidian District People's Court. (18 January 2019)



Xianzi v. Zhu Jun Sexual Harassment Damage Liability Dispute in Haidian District People's Court (2 December 2020)



The Beijing Haidian Court, after an in-camera hearing, found that the evidence submitted by Xianzi was insufficient to prove that Zhu Jun had sexually harassed her, and rejected her claim in the first instance (14 September 2021)



The Beijing Municipal First Intermediate People's Court held a closed-door hearing for the second trial of the case and upheld the verdict on the spot due to insufficient evidence (10 August 2022)



Zhu Jun applied to withdraw the August 2018 reputation lawsuit against Mai shao and Xianzi, the Beijing Haidian Court ruled to allow Zhu Jun to withdraw the lawsuit, thus ending Zhu Jun's case. (22 September 2023)

Figure 1: Xian and Zhu Jun's trial progress timeline

Since posting her experience of sexual harassment on Weibo in 2018, Xianzi has been actively using the account "@Xianzi and Her Friends" (Image 4)⁶ as a platform for publicizing the progress of her case and engaging in sexuality/gender-specific issues. Her account was banned at least twice until September 2023, when it was reinstated. Since then, Xianzi has kept fighting for her rights through legal measures and provided support and assistance to other victims who have similar experiences, promoting the spread and development of the #MeToo movement in China" (Zou et.al, 2021).



Image 4 @Xianzi and Her Friends
Screen shoot
Weibo.com

Xianzi's experience of cyber-harassment, humiliation, and hate speech, along with offline harassment, demonstrates the multi-faceted violence against women in positions like hers – as survivors of sexual violence, #MeToo advocates, participants in the judicial process, and feminist activists on platforms like Weibo. This case not only represents Xianzi's personal struggle but also symbolizes the larger battle faced by the feminist movement in China, navigating a landscape marked by censorship, societal backlash, amid the pursuit of justice and equality.

In the context of the evolving global feminist movements and their digital expressions, online activism has faced significant backlash, a trend that is both reflected and uniquely manifested in China's #MeToo movement. The case of Xianzi and Zhu Jun within this movement exemplifies not only the parallels with global anti-feminist rhetoric but also distinct elements unique to the Chinese sociopolitical context. This study aims to dissect these narratives, focusing on identifying the intersections and divergences between global and Chinese anti-feminist discourse. In particular, this study will investigate the nuances of anti-feminist rhetoric in China, exploring how it develops distinctive features and how

⁶ @Xianzi and Her Friends: Xianzi's Weibo account, As of 23 November 2023, the account has 350,000 followers.
<https://m.weibo.cn/u/6640656158?t=0&luicode=10000011&lfd=231583>

these narratives are legitimized.

In the backdrop of the dynamic evolution of global feminist movements and their digital manifestations, the realm of online activism has encountered significant resistance. This phenomenon, which is discernible worldwide, finds a distinct and intriguing expression within China's #MeToo movement. Within this context, the Xianzi and Zhu Jun case serves as an illustrative example, shedding light not only on the resonances with global anti-feminist discourse but also on the idiosyncratic features stemming from China's sociopolitical milieu. This scholarly inquiry seeks to deconstruct these narratives, with a primary focus on discerning the points of convergence and divergence between the global and Chinese anti-feminist discourses. Concurrently, it endeavors to comprehend the mechanisms by which these opposing narratives are rationalized and legitimized within China's sociopolitical framework. This research, in particular, delves into the subtleties of anti-feminist rhetoric in China, exploring the emergence of its distinctive attributes and the intricate dynamics of power and control that underlie these narrative constructs. By scrutinizing these elements through the prism of the prominent Xianzi and Zhu Jun case, this study aims to contribute to a more profound comprehension of the intricate challenges faced by feminist movements in the digital era. It does so with a specialized emphasis on the distinctive landscape within China's #MeToo movement.

This will narrow down to two questions:

1. In the case of Xianzi and Zhu Jun, what are the similarities and differences between the anti-feminist rhetoric of the Chinese #MeToo movement and the anti-feminist trends in the global online feminist movement?
2. What are the mechanisms of power and control that legitimise anti-feminist discourse in the digital feminist movement in China?

1.3. Purpose and Importance

The main objective of this study is to bridge the gap between the global feminist movement and the specific contours of the #MeToo movement in China (exemplified by the Xianzi and Zhu Jun incidents). This study attempts to dissect the complex interplay between global anti-feminist rhetoric and their unique manifestations in the Chinese context. By analysing the narratives surrounding the Xianzi and Zhu Jun's case, this study aims to shed light on the subtle ways in which Chinese anti-feminist discourses reflect and deviate from global trends, with a specific emphasis on the processes of rationalization and legitimization that these discourses undergo within the Chinese sociocultural milieu.

The importance of this study is to highlight how this study helps us better understand the commonalities and distinctions in anti-feminist discourse between the international and Chinese contexts. It endeavours to shed light on the specific cultural and political forces that shape anti-feminist discourse in China, providing insights into the broader dynamics of power and resistance in feminist discourse. This research not only enriches academic discussions on gender equality and feminist movements but also holds practical significance for activists, policymakers, and scholars striving to navigate and address the

intricacies inherent in both the global and Chinese feminist movements.

To this end, this study will add an important perspective to the global discourse on feminism, particularly by highlighting the unique challenges and strategies of the #MeToo movement in China. It hopes to enrich our understanding of the intricate relationship between online feminism, opposing discourse, and state power, thereby strengthening our approach to advocating for gender equality in different socio-political contexts.

1.4. Scope

This study focuses specifically on China's #MeToo movement, with a particular emphasis on the discourse opposing voices within the movement. It does not extensively analyze the actions and statements supporting the #MeToo movement, as it is primarily a analysis of the opposing discourse. Geographically, the research is confined to the context of China, covering the entire duration of the lawsuit from 2018 to 2023. Methodologically, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Leeuwen, 2008), aiming to reveal the culturally constructed power dynamics at play in this case. The study does not delve into legal proceedings in detail but will touch upon the struggles of sexual harassment victims in the current legal context of China. Additionally, it does not compare China's #MeToo movement with its counterparts in other countries. The intended audience for this research includes scholars in gender and development studies, social movement activists and researchers, as well as policymakers interested in gender equality in China and Asia.

1.5. Methodology Overview

This research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the critical analysis of opppsing discourse surrounding China's #MeToo movement. Data will be collected primarily from social media platform(Weibo), covering the period from 2018 to 2023. The core method of analysis will be Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Leeuwen, 2008), applied within the 'Wen-Wu' theoretical framework to unpack the cultural and ideological underpinnings of the discourse. This approach is chosen for its ability to elucidate the nuanced interplay of language, power, and societal norms in the context of gender equality movements. Ethical considerations, particularly in handling sensitive topics, will be addressed through anonymization and careful data handling. The limitations of this approach, including potential biases in the selected data sources and the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis, will be acknowledged and mitigated through a rigorous and reflexive analytical process.

1.6. Layout of the Article

Introduction: This section will set the stage for the study, providing background information, stating the problem, outlining the research objectives, and presenting the thesis statement.

Literature Review: This section will delve into existing research, focusing specifically on

academic perspectives on online opposition strategies against the feminist movement, the evolution of feminism in China, and critiques and applications of online anti-feminist strategies in the Chinese context. In addition, I will also highlight the history and development of the "Wen-Wu" perspective paradigm. This review will lay the groundwork for understanding the broader academic and cultural backdrop against which the #MeToo movement in China is situated.

Methodology: Here, the article will detail the qualitative approach, data collection methods, and the analytical framework (CDA within the "Wen-Wu" theoretical framework) used in the study.

Findings and Analysis: This section will present the results of the discourse analysis, interpreting these findings through the "Wen-Wu" paradigm and relating them to the research questions.

Conclusion: This part will summarize the key findings of the study, acknowledge its limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

References: The article will conclude with a references section, listing all sources cited throughout the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review critically assesses existing research on digital feminist movements, focusing on global anti-feminist rhetoric and its specific manifestations within China's #MeToo movement. While the case study of Xianzi and Zhu Jun has been explored in the introductory chapter, this review aims to critique the scholarship on the movement as a

whole. In doing so, it lays the theoretical and empirical foundations for a deeper understanding of this particular case. At the same time, the cultural calibration of the local "Wen-Wu" paradigm is used to deepen and explain oppositional discourse strategies in China.

Beginning with an examination of global patterns of resistance to digital feminist activism, the review establishes a broad context of the challenges feminist movements face worldwide. It then narrows down to focus on the Chinese #MeToo movement, highlighting key studies that shed light on the unique anti-feminist strategies emerging in this specific context.

Structured around four key themes – global online discourses against feminism, the progression and influence of China's #MeToo movement, anti-feminist strategies in Chinese social media, and the instrumental "Wen-Wu" paradigm – this section identifies gaps in current scholarship and proposes new interpretative tools. This approach lays the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis that bridges these themes and enriches the case study of Xianzi and Zhu Jun.

By integrating these diverse strands of literature, the review will elucidate the complex interplay between feminist activism, opposing discourse, and state power in China, while emphasizing the importance of local interpretative tools. The "Wen-Wu" paradigm, in particular, offers a critical lens for reinterpreting opposition strategies in the Chinese context. This methodology is essential for understanding the nuanced dynamics in the Xianzi and Zhu Jun case and provides new perspectives on feminism in the digital era, especially within the unique challenges of China's #MeToo movement. Thus, this literature review not only situates the case study within a broader academic discourse but also highlights potential pathways for exploring new insights into feminist movement studies.

2.2. Online discursive strategies against feminism

As a result of persistent patriarchy and gender inequality, women are often subjected to misogyny, violence and threats online (Susan, 2023). The development of digital culture and interactivity in social media has enabled online misogyny (Evan & Rilely, 2020) and fuelled this hegemonic ideology (Demir & Ayhan, 2022). Social media perpetuates cyberharassment (including sexualisation, emotional harassment, exclusionary sexualisation, etc.) (Demir & Ayhan, 2022), cyberabuse (defamation and/or libel, emotional harm and harassment, and threats, as well as the silencing of women's voices, the degradation and undermining of women in professional contexts, and the criticism of women's appearance, age, or other physical attributes) (Ging, 2019), and electronic bile (trolling, RIP trolling, cyberbullying, cyberviolence, cyberstalking, cyberhate, 'happy slapping') (Jane, 2014), although there are important differences between misogyny and anti-feminism. The former usually refers to a wider set of attitudes and behaviours towards women, whereas the latter relates to opposition to gender-specific political values that are not exclusively embraced by women (Ging, 2019). However, the line between misogyny

and anti-feminism is increasingly blurred, with a new generation of anti-feminists adopting a highly individualised style of politics, often without distinguishing between feminists and women (Ging, 2019). When the feminist movement becomes visibly powerful, the misogynist response becomes stronger—it is a "bad romance" (Banet-Weiser, 2018). As a result, the relationship between misogyny and anti-feminism continues to disrupt the development of the global feminist movement.

The new anti-feminist movement is attributed to a variety of factors, including the availability of social media technology, changing socio-cultural realities, and the emotional power of the politics of emotional culture. For instance, persecution of feminist work often involves a combination of gender, race, class, religious beliefs and immigration factors. Feminism has been portrayed as "reverse sexist" because in the "post-truth" context, feminists are seen as powerful but hypocritical and discredited; Rationalising the heterosexual superiority of white males, women and homosexuals are seen as even less knowledgeable others (Evan & Riley, 2020); Using Islamophobia and immigration fears to stir up the gender equality agenda, in Sweden, there is a tendency to use gender equality as a discursive strategy in order to criticize Islam and Muslims (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). In the context of #MeToo, the use of a "patronizing" discourse of comparisons not only denies the existence of rape culture but also serves to normalize and demystify sexual assault by offering a framework that contextualizes acts frequently dismissed as minor or insignificant; The conspiratorial mobilisation of terms such as 'gold digger, slut or groupie' (Banner & Paron, 2019), the treatment of women's experiences as a tactic to achieve certain social and economic goals, the public trial of hypocrisy in the #MeToo movement (Banner & Paron, 2019), e.g., the secondary victimisation caused by asking offensive questions about the voices of women victims (Chakraborty, 2019).

There is also much friction between the anti-feminist movement and post-feminism. Postfeminism has drawn gender politics into the cultural sphere (Tasker & Negra, 2007), while neoliberalism has fostered a revival of biologically essentialist understandings of gender. Postfeminism presents individualism, biological essentialism, the commodification of intimacy, the myth of achieving equality, a renewed focus on heteronormativity and gender war metaphors, and a turn towards the cultural politics of affect (Ging, 2019). These trends have contributed to and theorised the new politics of masculinity in unprecedented ways. Significantly, masculinist networks have expanded from earlier areas influenced by gender role theory, such as domestic violence, child custody, divorce and feminisation, to game culture (Ging, 2019), the seduction industry (O'Neill, 2015) and evolutionary psychology (Ging, 2019; Waśniewska, 2020). This has resulted in a loose network of blogs, forums, and online communities known as the "manosphere" (Lindsay, 2022). Most masculinist organisations rely on memes, which also include rape and death threats, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, spoofing, hacking, exposing personal information, cyberstalking, cyberhate, and other behaviours. These behaviours are used to vent the anger of their "affective publics" image, creating a large group of minorities who feel oppressed and marginalized (Evan & Riley, 2020). These groups are transnationally homogenous and rely on Web 2.0 platforms for personalised and atomised communication.

This online communication conveys both misogyny and anti-feminism, and shapes masculinist individualist responses that emphasise hegemonic features and reject inclusive features (Messner, 1998; Connell, 2005; Weiser, 2018). Related rhetorics include emotive public narratives of personalised suffering and shared experience, for instance, most men's rights website act as channels for the collective venting of anger (Ging, 2019); 'Crisis of masculinity' based on the exclusion of 'incel' and the 'crisis of masculinity' that develops under the pseudo-scientific focus on the 'sex market', for example, 'pill' narratives of the manosphere (Baele et al, 2019; Chang, 2020; Ging, 2017; Witt, 2020); The popularity of mocking the progressive left-wing agenda with humour and banter such as the various ironic comments, expressions and memes (Whitney & Ryan, 2017; Donovan, 2019; Dafaure, 2020; Maxime, 2022).

At the same time, the manosphere opens up an explicitly alternative right-wing universe of value systems (Lindsay, 2022). And in the alt-right, where misogyny acquires an overtly political dimension (Ging, 2019). These harmful masculinities are structurally produced as calls for the re-establishment of a patriarchal society (Greig, 2019), through call for the reassertion of patriarchal societies through the use of a style of militant misogyny (Zimmerman et al, 2018)). The agitators involved synthesise extreme rhetoric into a series of carefully selected scientific studies to support xenophobic, nationalistic and authoritarian narratives (Ging, 2019). This has led to the emergence of "random terrorism" in society, from cyber-misogyny to extreme mass violence (Munn, 2019).

This section illuminates global cyber strategies against feminism, highlighting the evolution of misogyny and cyber abuse in the digital sphere. The findings highlight for the first time the blurred lines between cybermisogyny and anti-feminism. They also explain the stigmatisation of feminism in the context of 'post-truth'; the conspiratorial shaming of female subjects as gold diggers, sluts or groupies; and the emergence of post-feminism and the emotional public of male victimisation as shaping the 'new masculinity' and the brewing alternative right system. The next section turns to the #MeToo movement in China and explores how these global models have taken on unique characteristics in the Chinese socio-cultural and political context. By understanding the broader context of feminist movements and opposition strategies in China, this study will be better able to analyse the complexities of the cases of Fairy and Zhu Jun, thereby highlighting the complex interplay between global influences and local dynamics in feminist movements.

2.3. China's #Metoo movement

The #MeToo movement in China originated in 2018 and was influenced by the #MeToo movement in the United States. As in other countries, this anti-sexual harassment movement has unfolded through social media and has become a new form of social movement known as "digital activism" (Yin & Sun, 2021). This movement, which aims to provide connection, is taking place in China in an individualised way (Pengxiang et al, 2020). The movement originated in the field of education. Some scholars argue that it is related to the imbalance of power between students and teachers due to the longstanding

Confucian ideology of "respecting teachers and valuing the way" and the institutional structure of universities in China. The majority of the overall allegations (31 of 56 reported cases of sexual violence) were then spread to the civil society, media and business sectors (Zeng, 2020). However, due to the Chinese government's vigilance and intolerance of any form of collective action, the movement has been subjected to constant cyber-censorship by the authorities (Yin & Sun, 2020). In this way, it has charted a different course than the Western #MeToo movement, creating a local flavour for the Chinese context.

As a movement under the world's most powerful online information flow control system, China's #Metoo movement has, from its inception, begun to inspire the most sophisticated "cyber-rebels" in their approach to fighting party-state censorship (Zeng, 2020). As with other bottom-up feminist struggles in China, the censorship of the #Metoo movement in China involves censoring online discussions and monitoring offline actions. This triggered different outcomes (Yin & Sun, 2020).

In the online context, participants in the movement utilised a variety of creative strategies to evade online censorship (Zeng, 2020)). Examples include the use of homophone disguises (the Chinese Mandarin pronunciation of the #Metoo movement is 'mitu'), the use of different emojis and 'coded language' utilising foreign languages and local dialects, rotating images when posting them in order to trick image-detection algorithms, and distributing them through uncensored places such as blockchain and GitHub. The adaptability of activists is key to the survival of Connections. And offline, marches and rallies rarely happen (Fincher, 2016). And the party state will find activists through different locator systems, with a significant number of feminists and journalists arrested. As one of the agendas within the feminist movement, the #MeToo movement called upon the 'counterpublics' of feminism as feminists and pro-change activists, the pro-change counterpublics who contested any unequal power relations, and the underclass counterpublics who were vulnerable and marginalised as subordinate (Yin & Sun, 2020). The movement's message to the public challenged patriarchy, while at the same time accomplishing individual empowerment and group-level empowerment, identity reconstruction and online interpersonal support for many feminists (Lin & Yang, 2019).

However, the limitations of the movement have also been pointed out by many scholars: short-term campaigns do not support long-term politicisation goals (Z Lin & Yang, 2019), most of the voices focusing on the movement come from elites with high social capital, and there is a certain lack of intersectionality (Yin & Sun, 2021), e.g. the neglect of working-class and rural women, and the low likelihood of "upward" influence on men in higher political positions (Zeng, 2020).

In analysing the opposition to the #MeToo movement in China, it is important to note the historical lineage of the feminist movement in China on the one hand, and how it has responded to different political power structures on the other (Zeng, 2020). Since the 1980s, when economic reforms began and China eagerly embraced capitalist globalisation,

feminism has suffered a serious backlash (Yin & Sun, 2021). The socialist feminist agenda was abandoned and attacked by the state. Many male intellectuals have adopted a gender essentialist discourse that associates femininity with domestic life and removes women's participation in productive and social spaces. Women were portrayed only as individualistic and consumerist subjects. In response to this backlash, feminists in the 1980s and 1990s attempted to build feminist NGOs and networks.

And as the movement grew along with global trends, feminism became a buzzword in China associated with neoliberalism and consumerism. This has to some extent shaped the post-feminist landscape in China. That is, a tendency towards commercialisation and individualism (Yin & Sun, 2021).

Hidden behind this are the internal and external problems that Chinese feminists face in today's China at the intersection of the Confucian revival and the global expansion of neoliberalism (Peng, 2020). Internally, commercialist pseudo-feminism creates the illusion that women have been empowered, while men are encouraged to fulfil the masculinity of their partners' material desires (Peng et al, 2021). And the propagation of ideologies of traditional masculinity enacted by the party-state in recent years and the continued fuelling of nationalism has led to the reinvention of state-sanctioned macho-nationalist ideals in the context of Chinese social media (Liao, 2019; Ling & Liao, 2021). When men are unable to satisfy, they fall into crises of masculinity and victimhood scenarios as a way of opposing feminism and exacerbating misogyny (Xiao, 2018). This exacerbates tensions between men and women.

At the same time, the hostility towards women in cyberspace, the persistent cyber-misogyny suffered by digital feminists in China, and the strong conservative opposition to public intellectuals have hindered the feminist movement (Ling & Liao, 2021). Digital feminism has gradually become associated with discourses of nationalism, masculinity, and platform governance (Gu & Luke, 2023). This eventually resulted in a platformised feminism that became the target of misogyny, anti-feminist backlash and even increased "feminist phobia" online and offline (Gu & Heemsbergen, 2018). Even more worryingly, as the party-state has a strong interest in any independent or bottom-up movements, protests and actions being suspected by the government as a potential threat to the party's political power (Yin & Sun, 2020). Digital feminism has been vilified as a plot launched by hostile Western forces to destabilise Chinese society. "Feminism" remains a controversial term (Huang, 2022).

With the rise of digital feminism in recent years, on the one hand, it seems to have begun a paradigm shift in feminist politics, but the interplay between feminism and neoliberalism in the digital age has raised concerns about its effectiveness (Baer, 2016). On the other hand, it has confined feminism to platforming, making it difficult to open up a more offline and centralised agenda (Gu & Luke, 2023). This has led to feminist factions with political potential being relegated to the margins. And the result of this is that in China, the censorship and surveillance of feminist activities and movements by the party-state is not

conducive to the formation of counter-power against the patriarchal system (Yin & Sun, 2021). This is especially true of feminism that takes place in platformisation (Liao, 2023). There is a lack of public awareness of feminism while being caught up in criticism of the elitist feminism and feminist movements that dominate in China. This keeps people who support change away from feminist struggles (Yin & Sun, 2021). And when traditional patriarchal discourses are wilfully manipulated by pseudo-feminist digital influencers, the destructive power of gender confrontation pervades cyberspace (Xinying et al, 2022). As Yin (2021) points out, for example, claims of so-called "pastoral feminism" defame rational feminist claims and go some way to discrediting feminists' longstanding efforts for gender equality.

To address the contemporary challenges facing the digital feminist movement, scholars recommend caution in dealing with digital technologies, which are increasingly and urgently integrated into feminist actions and movements. At the same time, construct more inclusive agendas and adopt various mobilisation strategies to promote greater participation (Yin & Sun, 2021).

In exploring the #MeToo movement in China, this section highlights its unique trajectory, characterised by the adaptation of digital activism to China's socio-political context. Influenced by global trends, the movement in China faces significant challenges, including state censorship; online misogyny; and hostile manipulation of feminist narratives. The movement, while echoing global patterns, has charted a distinct path in responding to entrenched patriarchal systems, state surveillance, and the complexities of digital activism under a powerful online information control system. These dynamics, including the struggle against the party-state's censorship and the creative evasion tactics employed by activists, reflect the unique environment of feminist activism in China. As the review moves to the section on "Different Strategies Against Feminism in Chinese Social Media," it will build upon these insights to explore how anti-feminist rhetoric and actions are specifically manifested and contested within the Chinese digital space. This exploration is crucial for understanding the broader context of the Xianzi and Zhu Jun case, as it provides a comprehensive background on the digital feminist landscape in which their story unfolds.

2.4. Opposing strategies against feminism in Chinese social media

Social media has raised the visibility of feminism to some extent, but at the same time, it has exposed and elevated anti-feminist voices and hegemony. In China, feminist writings, images, performing arts, theatre and videos have been subject to online attacks and abuse (Huang, 2022). On Chinese social media, the core arguments against the feminist movement revolve around the following core areas: populism/nationalism (Tan, 2021), the revival of traditional Confucianism (Xiao, 2018), and the threat of masculinity (Wu & Dong, 2019). Digital nationalism, a government propaganda strategy to reinforce authority, has also been mobilised to reinforce the ideology that feminists are linked to hostile forces abroad (Huang, 2022).

First, the controversy between populism/nationalism and feminism is seen in China as stemming from differences in political aspirations, historical perceptions and bases of existence (Wan, 2007). In recent years, nationalism in the global South has often been strongly opposed to feminism and gender equality, as they are seen as a threat to national identity, social traditions and the future of the nation. This is similar to the tactics of the global anti-feminist movement, highlighting the different interpretations of the human rights agenda within the power dynamics of the international North and South. In particular, resistance to feminism has been more pronounced in non-"Western" countries, where it is seen as an attempt to impose a universal ideology that contradicts local cultures, similar to the colonialism they suffered (Hovhannisyan, 2019). In the Chinese context, this conflicts with the social norms put forward by Confucianism and the sexist concepts of Confucianism. When women openly express feminist views, they are often seen as challenging Confucian gender values, norms and morals (Liu & Robin, 2016; Hovhannisyan, 2019). Feminism has been stigmatised by some as "Western 'feminist orientalism'" (Liu & Dahling, 2016), and as a result, there are increasing calls for the rejection of this foreign culture, creating geopolitical tensions between the "East" and the "West". Anti-feminists see feminism as a threat to traditional Chinese moral values and culture, especially at a time when the Chinese government has prioritised national renaissance in its political agenda. Chinese nationalism differs from that of many other Southern countries with colonial histories in that it emphasises 'national shame' and 'national pride' (Zhao, 2004). This attitude has influenced anti-feminists in China, who believe that the feminist movement has been exploited by hostile foreign forces (Fincher, 2018).

Second, feminists, as direct targets of "misogyny," have clashed with the Chinese government's efforts in recent years to restore "masculinity." The "crisis of masculinity" has often led to anxiety among Chinese men in their daily lives. Nationalist discourse has capitalised on this anxiety, forming an ideological tool to unify male groups against women (Han, 2023). In addition, "anti-political correctness" rhetoric constructs an alternative masculinity as a way of clarifying the legitimacy of nationalised anti-feminism (He, 2023). There is a link with the backlash against the masculinists in the international opposition to the feminist movement. Both signalled an alternative right-wing tendency towards victimhood arising from the loss of working-class masculinity. And as a result, an antipathy to the progressive agenda. The term "political correctness" has Chinese roots. It was widely used in political debates during the Cultural Revolution. People preemptively attacked their political opponents by labelling them as "politically incorrect" before the debate, with the aim of discrediting what their opponents were about to say (Ho, 2006). In the context of anti-political correctness rhetoric, Chinese feminists have also been accused of blindly following Western political correctness, resulting in reverse discrimination (Han, 2023).

Specifically, social media attack tactics against feminists include: feminists who betray their country (Huang, 2022): e.g., smearing feminists as sluts who crave the white man's phallus, don't abide by the rules of womanhood, are unfaithful to Chinese men, and are being

invaded by forces outside the country to split the motherland; and feminists with complexities to Islamists, for example: Using Islamophobia and Han supremacist to stir up public panic about feminist and feminist organisations; and "fake feminists" (Huang, 2022), which aim to dismantle the current feminist agenda, divide the feminist community into "real" and "fake", and continue to marginalise and stigmatise feminists. Notably, these four strategies are not mutually exclusive; rather, they often overlap in anti-feminist discourse. In the #MeToo movement, women who accuse men of being abusers are challenged to be the 'perfect victim' (Jane, 2016). This tactic is often used to target female victims of online hate.

Exploring these anti-feminist strategies in the context of Chinese social media leads us to the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm, which offers a cultural and theoretical lens to understand the opposition to feminism in China. This paradigm's application to masculinity and its societal implications will be instrumental in interpreting the dynamics at play in the feminist discourse.

In examining the strategies against the feminist movement in Chinese social media, academic research reveals a convergence of nationalism/populism; traditional Confucian values; reconstruction of masculinity under neoliberalism; party-state ideology and censorship; potential right-wing forces in shaping anti-feminist rhetoric with Chinese characteristics. This rhetoric, as scholars like Huang (2022) and Tan (2021) point out, often merges with digital nationalism, casting feminism as a challenge to Chinese culture and national identity. Such strategies not only label feminists as national traitors or 'fake feminists' but also exacerbate divisions within the movement itself. This part of the literature review paves the way for integrating the "Wen-Wu" paradigm into the analysis. As outlined by Edwards & Louie (1994), the "Wen-Wu" framework provides a cultural lens to dissect these opposition tactics, illuminating the intricate relationship between cultural traditions and gender norms in China. This paradigm becomes particularly insightful when examining the dynamics in the case study of Xianzi and Zhu Jun, offering a deeper understanding of the cultural and gendered narratives within the discourse against feminism in China's digital landscape.

2.5. "Wen-Wu" paradigm

The study of masculinity in China often invokes the concepts of "Wen-Wu" paradigm which is a categorization of masculine virtues in traditional Chinese culture. "Wen 文" represents "culture" and "civilization," while "Wu 武" stands for "martial strength" (Edwards & Louie, 1994). Their relationship often forms a binary opposition, with the ideal being a balance of the two styles, continuously mentioned in national governance and personal cultivation. The "Wen and Wu" paradigm frames the quadrant of the discourse by locating the ambiguous concepts of culture and strength. At the same time, as highly interpretable concepts, it provides a visionary tool for revealing and capturing the real

agenda behind the discourse with concepts that resemble the flow of "Yin 阴 and Yang

阳 ". It allows for a dynamic reading that rethinks the transfer of specific objects and the

impact on society presented by the rhetoric and semantics of the different strategies.

As a paradigm for conceptualizing masculinity, "Wen" and "Wu" apply to all social strata, symbolizing the potential for ultimate power (Louie, 2002). Throughout different historical periods, perceptions have varied on whether the ideal male temperament could encompass both "Wen" and "Wu," leading to the development of two opposing masculine virtues. "Indeed, at certain points in history the ideal man was expected to embody a balance of Wen and Wu. At other times only the one or the other was expected, but importantly it was considered acceptably manly" (Edwards & Louie, 1994). In the term "Wen-Wu 文武,"

"Wen" is always placed before "Wu." The masculinity of "Wen" is directly related to power and privilege (Edwards & Louie, 1994; Louie, 2015). But "Wu" is not simply brawn, It is a cultural artefact such as martial arts which needs to be embraced and mastered if one is to excel" (Edwards & Louie, 1994). Throughout history, there has been a tense relationship between these two masculine virtues, a divergence that continues to this day. Under the influence of global neoliberalism and consumerism, masculinity in contemporary China is increasingly mixed. The importance of "Wen" has been diminished by its increased weight in the construction of the heterosexual male ideal in the post-reform era. The rise of "Wu" speaks to the socio-political engineering of the present era, in which the intensification of geopolitical friction between China and the West on the world stage has fuelled nationalist sentiments among the Chinese people. Nationalism is a tool for achieving male hegemony and restoring masculinity, and this connection can instigate the legitimisation of anti-feminist rhetoric and attacks on women as a sign of patriotic defence and commitment to the nation (Nagel, 1998).

In the context of the "Wen-Wu" paradigm, scholarly literature highlights how the traditional Chinese conceptualization of masculinity, embodying "Wen" (culture) and "Wu" (martial strength), influences the nation's gender norms and attitudes towards feminism. This paradigm provides a critical framework for understanding the cultural roots of anti-feminist sentiment in Chinese social media and the broader #MeToo movement. Researchers like Louie and Edwards emphasize the historical oscillation between "Wen" and "Wu" virtues, illustrating how shifts in these ideals impact perceptions of masculinity and feminism. The paradigm's relevance is significant in decoding how nationalism and traditional masculinity intertwine to shape anti-feminist strategies, as seen in the discourse against feminism in China. This cultural lens enriches the examination of global online discourses against feminism and the specific challenges within China's #MeToo movement, offering valuable insights into the dynamic interplay of cultural narratives, gender norms, and feminist activism.

2.6. Discussion

This review surveys the academic backlash against feminist movements on the Internet, contrasting the #MeToo movement with the general feminist movement in China. It reveals party-state ideological control and censorship of speech; entrenched misogyny under patriarchy; feminism appropriated as an international power struggle in a post-colonial context; loss of masculinity and victimhood; and the underlying alternative right-wing tendency as a transnational phenomenon that transcends cultural boundaries.

In the Chinese context, traditional Confucianism and Han-centric nationalism highlight misogyny as a global issue with unique local manifestations. Despite existing literature addressing the intersection of feminism, nationalism, and digital spaces, there's a notable gap in gendered analysis, particularly through the "Wen-Wu" paradigm. This paradigm, deeply rooted in Chinese cultural heritage, offers a nuanced lens to understand masculinity and its influence on anti-feminist rhetoric. Applying "Wen-Wu" to the Xianzi and Zhu Jun case provides an innovative perspective to dissect gender dynamics within China's #MeToo movement, bridging a critical gap in feminist and gender studies. This approach not only enriches the understanding of China's specific socio-cultural context but also contributes to the broader discourse on feminism and its opposition in the digital era.

Therefore, I deepened my two specific research questions as:

1. From the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm, How does the anti-feminist rhetoric in China's #MeToo movement, particularly in the case of Xianzi and Zhu Jun, reflect and diverge from global anti-feminist trends?
2. From the perspective of the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm, what specific mechanisms of power and control are used as legitimization strategies against the digital feminist movement in China?

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This study primarily focuses on the discourse opposing the #MeToo movement that emerged on Weibo in the context of the "Xianzi and Zhu Jun case." As a case study, it aims to explore the specific forms of these discourses and how they reveal underlying ideological connections. The "Xianzi and Zhu Jun case," a sexual harassment case that has received considerable attention in recent years, has sparked public interest in gender issues and various responses to the #MeToo movement. By discussing these connections in-depth, this study seeks to understand the specific relationships, production mechanisms, and power dynamics of oppositional discourse in social media, particularly focusing on how these factors contribute to the rationalization and legitimization of attack strategies against the feminist movement. This research context is crucial for understanding the

challenges to feminism in the current digital space, both academically and practically.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Leeuwen, 2008), this study will examine contexts, textual actions, and how participants in the oppositional #MeToo discourse use text to dominate and control others, thereby creating specific "versions of reality." This approach is informed by Theo van Leeuwen's theory of discourse legitimation, which encompasses naturalization, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis (2008). Each type of legitimation plays a specific role in discourses. For instance, authorization emphasizes the authoritative sources of discourse; moral evaluation focuses on the moral values in discourse; rationalization centers on the logic and efficiency of discourse; and mythopoesis involves the process of constructing and conveying specific ideologies through narratives. By employing these concepts, the study will deeply analyze how oppositional #MeToo discourses gain legitimacy on different levels and explore how these discourses shape perceptions and responses to gender issues within the Chinese social and cultural context.

Combining the "Wen-Wu" perspective with the CDA framework, this study not only provides a new viewpoint on the current discourse opposing the #MeToo movement but also makes significant academic and practical contributions to understanding the debates over gender issues and obstacles faced by gender equality movements in the digital age. The following sections will detail the study's design, data collection methods, and analysis process to ensure the research's transparency and replicability.

3.2. Research Design

"Xianzi and Zhu Jun case" on Weibo to analyze the discourse opposing the #MeToo movement. The case study method allows for an in-depth exploration and understanding of complex social phenomena, revealing the meaning and impact of discourse within specific contexts. To address the research questions, this study opts for a qualitative research approach, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This method is suitable for this research as it reveals the underlying ideologies and social practices within the discourse, helping us understand how the "inner cultural techniques" of the discourse opposing the #MeToo movement are constructed and disseminated on the Weibo platform.

The theoretical framework of this study is informed by Theo van Leeuwen's discourse legitimation theory, integrated with the "Wen-Wu" paradigm. This dual-framework plays a key role in interpreting and analyzing data, offering a unique perspective for understanding how gender topics are discussed and shaped within the Chinese cultural context. This perspective is particularly insightful in examining the power structures and gender dynamics that are prevalent in the discourse.

The research design closely revolves around two core research questions: first, exploring how China's anti-feminist discourse responds to and deflects international discourse and

creates its own; analysing potential legitimising power operations. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, incorporating aspects like naturalization, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis, we can delve deeply into the structure and content of these discourses, revealing how they influence public cognition and behavioral patterns.

3.3. Population and Sample

The overall subject of this study is all individuals who participated in discussions about the Zhu Jun case on Weibo. As a widely used social media platform in China, Weibo gathers a diverse user group who engage in discussions on various topics. During the Zhu Jun case, a substantial amount of public discussion emerged, reflecting Chinese society's attitudes and viewpoints towards sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement.

Given the vast size and difficulty of comprehensively accessing the entire population, this study adopted a convenience sampling method, focusing on collecting "popular Weibo posts" related to the Zhu Jun case from the Weibo platform. The sample selection emphasized popular topics marked with the keywords "Zhu Jun" and "Xianzi" during the period from September 2018 to September 2023. This timeframe covers the entire process of the Zhu Jun case from exposure to the conclusion of the lawsuit, ensuring that the sample could reflect the full scope of public discussions during the litigation period. Although selecting popular Weibo posts might introduce a bias due to the platform's content promotion strategy, this method enabled the study to effectively capture viewpoints that triggered widespread public attention and discussion. Additionally, considering these popular Weibo posts represented the focus of public discussions, they, to some extent, reflect the mainstream reactions and attitudes of society towards the Zhu Jun case. To enhance the diversity and comprehensiveness of the sample, this study also included some relevant non-popular Weibo posts, ensuring a more multifaceted understanding of the complexities of public discussions.

3.4. Procedure

This study focused on the Weibo platform, using the keywords "Zhu Jun," "Xianzi," and "Mai Shao Student" to search for topics related to the Zhu Jun case. These keywords were chosen as they are directly linked to the central figures of the case and avoid the use of verbs, adjectives, and modifiers that might limit the scope of data. From these searches, 45 topics were identified and selected (see Appendix), covering the entire timeline from the case's exposure to its conclusion, ensuring the comprehensiveness and relevance of the data. These Weibo posts tagged with these themes are the targets of my collection.

In these topics, a total of 120 Weibo posts were collected, with 72.5%(n=87) being "popular" posts. Although popular posts may reflect the platform's promotional strategy, they provide a window to observe viewpoints that generated widespread public interest and discussion. Furthermore, to increase sample diversity and reduce potential biases, a

random sampling method was also employed to select non-popular Weibo posts. The criteria for random sampling included choosing posts published by non-verified users with lower levels of interaction and ensuring these posts were distributed throughout the entire study period.

All data were imported into Nvivo 14.23.0 (13) for organization and coding. Since the software could not directly process Chinese information, I resorted to manual coding. This process involved reading each Weibo post, taking notes, and categorizing the data into different coding categories based on the content. This method allowed me to read the data thoroughly and flexibly generate and adjust research ideas throughout the process.

In the initial open coding phase, I identified 42 different thematic categories (see Appendice), mainly based on roles, emotional attitudes, strategies, and rhetorical elements in the data. Then, through more detailed reading and analysis, I further refined these themes, eventually identifying 11 secondary themes and 3 axial themes (image 1). The identification and categorization of these themes directly supported my research question, especially in analyzing the impact of the discourse opposing the #MeToo movement under the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm and exploring the potential ideological relationships in the discourse.

Regarding the limitations of the study, I acknowledge that due to the selection of 'popular' Weibo posts and the presence of censorship mechanisms, the sample may have biases. I acknowledge and discuss these limitations in my analysis, and also incorporate them as part of critical analysis, especially when examining content management and promotion strategies on the platform. This not only helped to understand the context of the data but also provided insights into the operational mechanisms of social media platforms.

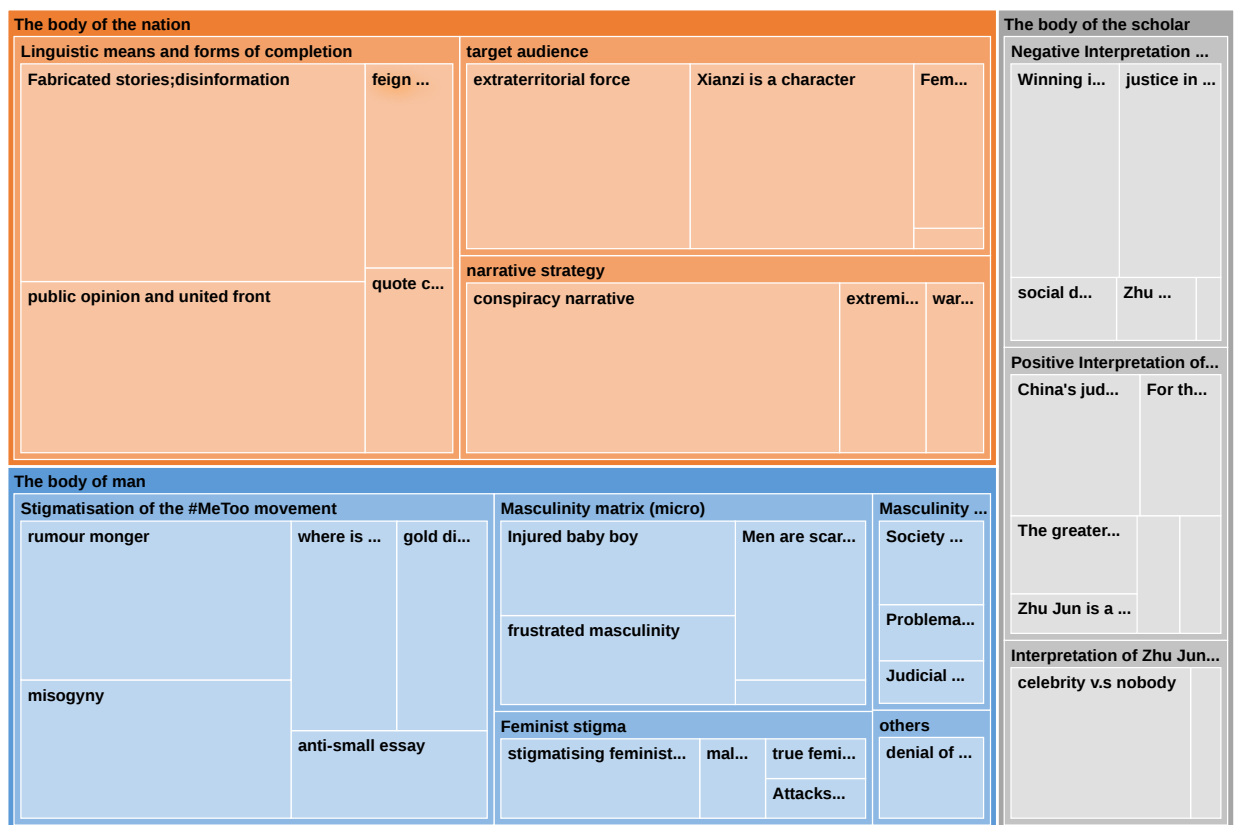


Image 5: Coding Map

3.5. Data Analysis

3.5.1. Critical Discourse Analysis under the 'Wen-Wu' Paradigm

My analysis is grounded in the "wen-wu" paradigm, which is a postcolonial cultural critique perspective that is also applicable within the Chinese context(). This paradigm proves invaluable in discerning various strategies within discourse, particularly in understanding the true intent behind it. Furthermore, it employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how discourse interacts with cultural norms and real power dynamics while undergoing legitimization processes, as discussed in Theo van Leeuwen's work on discourse legitimacy.

Through this approach, the study investigates how discourse employs "authorization," "moral evaluation," "rationalization," and "mythpoesis" as tools of legitimacy (van Leeuwen, 2008, pp.105-136). The confirmation of "authorization" agents helps elucidate their explicit support for power, aligning with the "wen-wu" paradigm. "Moral evaluation" becomes entangled with cultural, political, economic, and diplomatic considerations in the process of legitimizing its moral standing. Additionally, "myth narratives" play a role in constructing explicit, specific agendas capable of revealing the purposes of power.

This analysis not only reveals the diversity of discursive strategies but also reflects the complex interactions between different subjects, including individuals, celebrities, and the state. The interplay of these strategies within the cultural context of 'Wen-Wu' demonstrates how power dynamics and cultural ideologies are intricately woven into the fabric of the discourse. The application of van Leeuwen's concepts of discourse legitimation provides a robust framework to decipher these dynamics, offering deep insights into the multifaceted nature of discourses opposing the #MeToo movement on Weibo.

3.5.2. Combining Existing Literature and Case Analysis

In my analysis, I first reviewed existing studies opposing the #MeToo/feminist movement, then reinterpreted these strategies through the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm in terms of their localization and Chinese characteristics. This step allowed me to intersect with Chinese indigenous ideologies and further explore the combined effects of the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm and critical discourse analysis methods.

3.6. Validity and Reliability

3.6.1. In-depth Analysis of the Data

By thoroughly analyzing discussions on Weibo about the Zhu Jun case, I ensured that the research results accurately reflect the perspectives and attitudes of social media users. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm, I was able to deeply understand and reveal the implicit meanings and power structures within the discourse.

3.6.2. Triangulation

To enhance the credibility of the research, I used a triangulation method, comparing and cross-verifying the consistency and complementarity of different data sources (such as popular vs. non-popular Weibo posts) and theoretical frameworks (such as the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm and CDA).

3.6.3. Ensuring Reliability

3.6.3.1. Systematic Data Collection and Analysis Process

I adopted a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Using keyword searches and convenience sampling ensured the consistency of data collection. During the analysis, NVivo software was used for detailed data coding and thematic categorization, ensuring the systematic and traceable nature of the analysis process.

Repeated Data Review: I conducted multiple rounds of review of the collected data to ensure the accuracy of coding and thematic categorization. In addition, regular review of analysis results ensured the consistency and coherence of the research.

3.6.4. Addressing Limitations and Bias:

Acknowledging and Discussing Biases: I acknowledge the potential biases that may arise from data collection based on popular Weibo posts and incorporate this into my analysis. By contrasting analysis of non-popular Weibo posts and exploring the promotion strategies of the Weibo platform, I was able to more comprehensively understand the background and meaning of the data.

Cultural Sensitivity and Background Understanding: In analyzing using the 'Wen-Wu' paradigm, I paid special attention to maintaining cultural sensitivity and a deep understanding of Chinese society and culture, to ensure the relevance and depth of the research results.

3.7. Limitations

3.7.1. Focus on the Opposition Discourse Strategies

This study focuses on the strategies opposing the #MeToo movement on Weibo and their entanglement with different ideologies. It is noteworthy that this focus implies a lack of full representation of the resilience of the feminist movement in China itself. Nevertheless, the aim of this study is not to overlook the importance of the feminist movement, but to recognize and celebrate its impact and contributions more comprehensively by understanding the strategies of opposition discourse in depth.

3.7.2. Impact of Platform Censorship and Characteristics of a Single Platform

Since the data primarily comes from Weibo, platform censorship and specific characteristics of the platform might have affected the completeness and representativeness of the data. Censorship mechanisms may hide or delete certain topics, and the algorithm and user demographics of Weibo might favor certain types of content. These factors could limit the understanding of the full scope of public discourse.

3.7.3. Focus on Gender-Centric Analysis

While this study primarily focuses on the strategies opposing the #MeToo movement on Weibo, it intentionally emphasizes gender as a central theme. This focus reflects the critical role of gender in shaping discourses around feminism and anti-feminism. Given the "Wen-Wu" paradigm's gender-centric approach, this study naturally gravitates towards gender as a primary lens for analysis. This emphasis acknowledges the intersectionality of gender with other factors, recognizing that other aspects like socio-economic status and political beliefs also play a role in shaping the discourse. However, the concentration on gender is a deliberate choice to explore the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and their influence on the opposition discourse.

4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the manifestation of anti-feminist rhetoric in China's This section collates and analyses 120 tweets under a total of 45 topics by collating and analysing social media data based on 2018-2023 collected from the Xianzi and Zhu Jun cases. This section will address the intersection and separation of 'international' and Chinese anti-feminist strategies and how they are shaped into legitimising discourses. I will analyse the power dynamics through the lens of the 'wen-wu' paradigm and CDA's methodology on the construction of discursive legitimacy (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

4.2. Anti-Feminism Strategies: Similarities and Differences in Chinese and International Contexts and the Legitimization of Power

This section is divided into three parts, using the cases of Xianzi and Zhu Jun as background. How do these discourses reflect international anti-feminist discourses? What are some of the anti-feminist discourses that have taken a different departure from the

international? and a summary of these two questions.

By collating and summarising the data. Firstly I identified the possible tendencies that the data presented in the Weibo platform. In the investigation of social media discourse about Xianzi and Zhu Jun from 2018-2023. Based on the distribution of 45 topics, explicit references to "Zhu Jun" are significantly higher than those to "Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan" or "Maishao/Maishao Student". Maishao Student" (See Appendix). This highlights the inequality of public attention and the potential tendency of platform steering. The emergence of topics in Weibo is based on the interaction between the platform's algorithm and users. At the same time, the data suggests that positive affective attitudes towards Zhu Jun are higher than those towards "Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan" or "Maishao/Maishao Student". This highlights both public and potential platform sentiment tendencies. It is worth noting that during my search, I tried to search for the topics "Mi Bunny Campaign", "Xianzi and her friends", and "Zhu Jun Sexual Harassment", and the keywords all show "Results are against the rules". This sideways proves the platform's potentially tendentious attitude towards different characters on the topic. This confirms the general academic perception of the Weibo platform's censorship mechanism, which selectively censors content, and the potentially unsupportive attitude of the #MeToo movement in Chinese social media.

Furthermore, I identified different types of explicit references to international oppositional discourse strategies (n=85) and Chinese oppositional discourses (n=35). It is worth noting that even though statistically international oppositional discourse strategies seem to be mentioned more highly, this does not mean that Chinese oppositional discourse is lacking in creativity. On the contrary, international oppositional discourse strategies and Chinese oppositional discourse strategies often appear in tandem and serve as mutual legitimising tools.

4.2.1. Dictatorships and Traditional Confucian Cultural Opposition to Feminism

"First of all, Zhu Jun, a social figure who has been a CCTV⁷ host for decades, who has always shown positive energy and can be considered a household name, is so desperate for sex that he molested a freshly minted college student?" #Zhu Jun Wins # 13th August 2022.

"@Xianzi & her friends You're gone crazy from being broke? Look at your face, a household name CCTV anchor would harass you?" #Zhu Jun Returns To CCTV#31th December 2022.

⁷ CCTV: China Central Television, China's only national television network. The central government oversees CCTV via two interlocking systems, the ideological system of the party's Propaganda Department, which provided mostly guidelines and thought directives, and the administrative system of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), which performs the actual daily oversight, including censorship of sensitive content. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=zh-CN&lr=&id=pSitxZYfASIC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=CCTV+china&ots=2IpMTL4goq&sig=qfYE-GXFujQW1Ouapzu9r28uS5A&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=CCTV%20china&f=false

"To put it bluntly, even if this kind of character is really desperate for sex, there are 'high-class clubs'. Can still do this thing of eating the grass on the edge of the nest?" #Zhu Jun First Response # 22th December 2020

As a "host of CCTV programmes for decades", "a positive personality", and "a household name", Zhu Jun, as an idealised embodiment of a "wen" masculinity, conforms to the public's imagination of the image of a "scholars 士人" - that is, one who possesses cultural cultivation, professional knowledge, and public influence and a certain degree of authority (Hird, 2017). On the one hand, his lawsuits, particularly cases of sexual harassment, have mobilised a public curiosity about celebrity voyeurism on social media platforms (Eronen, 2014), and this attracted a fair amount of attention. On the other hand, Zhu Jun's silence and denial led the public to prejudice based on a natural trust bias towards his 'scholar' image, choosing to perceive Xianzi as 'gone crazy from being broke'. This apparent sympathy for those in positions of power and devaluation of those in positions of power (especially women) in sexual assault-related incidents fits into the misogynistic stereotype of women as lazy, greedy consumers, and capitalizes on the concern that manipulative, aggressive women conspire and plan to take down their male counterparts (Banner & Paron, 2019). The discourse that Zhu Jun as a celebrity could have gone to 'high-class clubs' also directly cancels out the existence of 'rape culture' in the power imbalance by rationalizing Zhu Jun's sexuality. The allusion to Xianzi's "gold-digging woman" has the same misogynistic basis in Confucian morality. This scenario mirrors the Confucian moral framework where the pursuit of immediate profits is seen as base, in contrast to gentlemen who adhere to fundamental principles (Hird, 2017). In this context, Zhu Jun is seen as a masculine figure with higher moral and ethical standards, serving as a moral exemplar, a narrative that falls under mythopoesis. It is crucial to note that entrenched traditions of misogyny and patriarchy often result in a more permissive attitude towards men's sexual conduct (Carmody, 2003), disproportionately blaming women for sexual morality issues. This dynamic rationalizes objectifying women as profit-seekers, solidifying Zhu Jun's image as a 'gentleman (正人君子)'. This portrayal, essential in maintaining Zhu Jun's integrity, simultaneously reinforces misogyny and undermines the feminist movement.

"Zhu Jun has won the case, but still, he lost. For over three years, he couldn't appear on camera or work. He faced online exposure, verbal abuse, and ridicule. It's almost akin to social death, and the likelihood of him making a comeback seems slim." #ZhuJunWins# 15th September 2021

"Zhu Jun, given his unique identity, as he himself stated, didn't dare to appear in court not because of fear, but because his status demands it. He can't freely defend himself like an ordinary person! It's a simple truth: the duty of a Chinese soldier is to obey!" #Zhu Jun's First Response# 22 th December

In a society deeply rooted in patriarchal beliefs, particularly under authoritarian rule, efforts to rehabilitate Zhu Jun's image not only reinforced biases against women but also opposed

the feminist movement. These endeavors, supported by a dictatorship favoring traditional gender roles, inadvertently resisted feminist ideals, relegating gender equality to the margins. This underscores how the misogynistic undercurrents of traditional Confucian culture are subtly integrated into the adulation of celebrities embodying 'Wen' masculinity. Moreover, Zhu Jun's "loses," his experiences of "social death," and the notion that "a soldier's duty is obedience" reveal the intricate interplay between male victimhood narratives and China's authoritarian regime. On one hand, this emphasizes society's fascination with the portrayal of men as "victims" within gender discourse and strategies that falsely accuse women of being the actual aggressors. On the other hand, it interacts with China's institutional framework, portraying Zhu Jun as a sacrificial figure to the system, and denying women.

Therefore, despite the fact that the whole case has lasted for five years, and that Zhu Jun has only responded publicly once, never attending the trial, the public is still generally inclined to believe that this positive host has not done anything that does not conform to his image. The public has legitimated the narrative of why Zhu Jun rarely responds and never attends court hearings. This perception fits into the framework of recontextualization, where Zhu Jun's silence and low profile are not merely personal choices but are seen as embodying a 'wen temperament, necessary for maintaining dignity and prestige. This recontextualization process provides a framework to address the underlying query of 'Why should Zhu Jun adopt this particular approach?' (van Leeuwen, 2006), in the context of his behavior and the public's interpretation thereof. The conclusion drawn from this perspective posits that Zhu Jun's conduct is emblematic of his 'wen' temperament, a necessary attribute for sustaining his stature and respectability in the public eye.

Furthermore, this silence and absence do not diminish public discussion about his image; rather, they have been strategically interpreted and characterized, inferring a notion of 'social death.' Zhu Jun's silenced 'scholar' image is closely tied to the system, allowing for the construction of a more multidimensional public image of him as an ideal masculinity. This aligns with mythopoesis, where legitimization is achieved through storytelling, framing Zhu Jun's actions as those of a soldier who prioritizes the bigger picture and obeys his superiors' commands. This narrative reflects a loyalty to the party-state system and influences public evaluation of Zhu Jun as a 'scholar 士人' and the party-state system at large. Thus, Zhu Jun's professional requirements as a soldier and his role as a CCTV host, a symbol of the party-state system, directly impact the public's perception. His behavior and status, therefore, must be handled with care to maintain the legitimacy of both his image and that of the party-state system.

4.2.2. Nationalist/Populist Opposition to Feminism in the Post-Truth Era

"The Zhu Jun-Xianzi incident, to some extent, is no longer just about the personal grievances between two individuals! Those who are curious might want to look up related topics, especially how foreign powers are almost unanimously supporting Xianzi. And those English-language signs are not just simply supporting Xianzi, but are targeting China! Accusing China of hypocrisy! Such obvious defamation, don't say you don't understand it!" #ZhuJun First Response# 22th December 2020

"Who stands behind Xianzi? It's Western powers, it's Hong Lida⁸, it's Lü Pin⁹, it's feminist activists both domestically and internationally, it's Xiao Meili¹⁰ and others who are heavily utilized by the CIA. Who is crying injustice for Xianzi? It's the BBC, it's CNN..." #ZhuJunWins# 13th August 2022

Firstly, the discourse surrounding the Xianzi-Zhu Jun incident transcends individual grievances, evolving into a complex narrative intertwined with international politics and post-colonial sentiments. What's interesting is that the strategy of internalising and domesticating the international is one that perpetuates and politicises the dichotomy between China and the West, a division that is itself part of the hegemonic conception of the world order (Zhang, 2022). This broader narrative, fueled by the public's engagement with the involvement of foreign powers, effectively reorients the focus from a personal dispute to a symbolic clash in the global geopolitical arena. Assertions of unanimous 'foreign support' for Xianzi, coupled with accusations of Chinese hypocrisy, exemplify this shift. These claims extend beyond mere support for Xianzi, evolving into a critique of China itself. Thus, in the post-colonial context of China, feminism becomes entangled in the larger narrative of national identity and international relations, where defending against Western encroachment is conflated with resisting feminist ideals. At the same time, the distortion and conspiratorialization of information in the 'post-truth' era also plays into such nationalist narratives, with the claims that the 'CIA' stands behind Xianzi, and that the 'BBC and CNN' are 'crying' over her, based on a nationalist/populist process that has become 'politically correct' in China. The result is a complex and multi-layered discourse where feminism is not only opposed on the basis of gender politics but is also post-truth stigmatized as part of a larger battle against Western domination and influence.

This combination of tactics makes the feminist movement in China has been largely contaminated on social media as a Western plot to infiltrate China and overthrow the party-state (Huang, 2023). This transformation of the narrative plays into a burgeoning legitimization process, positioning the foreign entities' involvement and their perceived motivations as central to understanding the incident within a post-colonial framework. The narrative suggests that the rise of 'wu' is a compelled decision, a necessary stance for

⁸ Leta Hong Fincher has written for the New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian, Dissent Magazine, Ms. Magazine, Harper's Bazaar and others. As a long-time TV and radio journalist based in China, she won the Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award, the Cowan Award for Humanitarian Reporting and other journalism honors for her reporting. Leta's previous book, *Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China*, was named Best Book of the year by Vanity Fair, Newsweek, Foreign Policy Interrupted, Bitch Media and Autostraddle; it was also a New York Times "New and Noteworthy" pick. <https://letahongfincher.com/about-leta-hong-finch-2023>

⁹ Lv Pin, Chinese feminist activist, columnist. Founding Editor-in-Chief of Feminist Voices. <https://twitter.com/pinerpiner>

¹⁰ Xiao Meili, her real name is Xiao Yue. She has played a major role in China's #MeToo movement, both as an activist and a spokesperson for sexual assault survivors. https://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Xiao_Meili

national and cultural preservation in a world perceived to be dominated by Western hegemonic forces. Consequently, the discourse shifts from a mere mourning of the lost 'wen' to an active endorsement and glorification of 'wu', positioning it as essential for the survival and assertion of Chinese cultural and national identity in a post-colonial context. This shift from 'wen' to 'wu' is not merely a natural transition but is depicted as a necessary and almost forced response to the perceived threats and challenges posed by external forces, especially those aligned with Western ideologies.

" After four years in which a renowned host was eclipsed by a brief essay by a female activist, can this period lead to a broader societal reevaluation of genuine feminism? Will it prompt a reexamination of values such as equality, rights, and freedom? " #Zhu Jun's Return to CCTV #December 29, 2022.

This discourse aligns with the previous rhetoric that demonizes feminism as a threat, aiming to ensure that opposing forces retain the definitional authority over feminism. Here, anti-feminists portray themselves as neutral, objective, and even somewhat reluctant actors. This stance directly undermines the legitimacy of Xuanzi's actions and attempts to offer 'cultured' and 'reasonable' moral guidance. In alignment with preceding rhetorical strategies that have vilified feminism as a formidable threat, the present discourse endeavors to ensure that the antagonistic entities maintain definitional sovereignty over the concept of feminism. Within this narrative, individuals opposed to feminist ideologies depict themselves as entities embodying neutrality, objectivity, and a certain degree of reluctance.

This representation effectively nullifies the legitimacy of Xuanzi's series of actions, simultaneously endeavoring to impart 'cultured' and ostensibly 'rational' moral instruction, echoing the scholarly virtues of 'wen'. The discourse engages in a comparative analysis juxtaposing 'a female activist' with the ideation of 'authentic feminism,' alongside values encompassing 'equality, rights, and freedom.' This subtly conveys a disparaging assessment of feminists akin to Xianzi, while concurrently suggesting that these occurrences are not merely isolated events. Considering the preceding contextualization of feminism as largely a 'Western construct' and an instrument purportedly aimed at the fragmentation of China, a nationalist paradigm has been ingrained as a fundamental criterion for delineating 'real' versus 'fake' feminism. By "civilising" the "real" feminism as civilised, progressive and peaceful, the discourse implies a negative presentation of the "fake" feminism as "violent", "cruel" and "aggressive". The utilization of the term 'genuine feminism' engenders a hypothetical juxtaposition between the prevailing societal values and those being proposed, with nationalism serving as the evaluative standard. The strategy of refraining from an explicit definition of feminism, opting instead to categorize it merely in terms of 'positive' or 'negative' attributes, represents an attempt by the counter-discourse to exert dominion over the feminist discourse. As elucidated by Huang (2023), this approach "effectively distances feminist thought from the presupposed notions of gender equality, redirects public focus towards reasserting dominance over women, and confers legitimacy and credibility to the anti-feminist political agenda, thereby reinforcing the foundations of patriarchal authority".

"Zhu Jun has withdrawn his lawsuit, yet the feminists have not let go of him. Instead, they have launched another wave of attacks and defamation. This reminds me of that famous poem by Tian Jian: 'If we do not go to war, the enemy will kill us with bayonets and then point at our dead bodies, saying: "Look, these are slaves!"' #Zhu Jun Withdraws Lawsuit# 24th September 2023

It is worth emphasising that nationalism is not only discursive and institutional, but also affective and experiential (Heaney, 2013). The exploitation of "shame" was an important emotional logic to evoke the theme of national salvation and legitimised the authoritarian rule of the party-state, as the CCP claimed that the new discovery of nationalism was a tool to strengthen national cohesion. The theme of "national shame" as a theme for the restoration of Chinese masculinity is also consistent in this type of rhetoric (Louie, 2014; Song, 2010). The references to "shame" as an evaluative adjective and "nationalism" intertwine them with gender dynamics to form a moral stance against the feminist movement. The discourse in question utilises the affective discourse of nationalism to constitute a political discourse with nationalist overtones in the debate on gender. In this context, the role of feminists has been constructed as part of a Western conspiracy and feminists have been demonised as "female fists" who only advocate violence, "bayonet-wielding slave masters with brutal acts of violence". This not only reflects the focus on the intersection of nationalism and gender dynamics, but also summons up echoes of "shame" as a collective memory of the transformation of Chinese masculinity. This dynamic further reinforces the negativity and even hostility towards feminists.

Since the mid-1980s, the transformation of China's "wu rather than wen 重武轻文" masculinity has existed as a response to the "hundred-year national shame" in the collective memory (Tok, 2013). A sense of victimisation associated with the national memory of the "hundred years of national shame", referring to the period between 1840 and 1945, when China was ruled by the Chinese and invaded by the Japanese (Hu and Guan, 2021). In times of instability, "wu" have been utilised as a way to revitalise masculinity and the state (Peng et al., 2023). The collective masculinity of the Chinese proletariat, in facing the 'inferiority complex' produced by Western hegemonic culture, has shaped the deeply rooted male anxieties of today. (Song, 2010). This historical shame has been mobilised to reinforce fuelling resentment towards the West and feminist movements, and thus strengthening nationalist positions. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, there has closely linked the rise of Chinese nationalism to China's so-called xenophobia, "diplomatic self-confidence" and "anti-Japanese/American sentiment" (Unger, 2016; Zhao, 2016). These characteristics can be said to reveal the unique core of contemporary Chinese nationalism - "shame" as a historical legacy and collective memory gives Chinese nationalism some "disempowering" characteristics. The discourse thus effectively leverages moral evaluation legitimation to reinforce negative perceptions and even hostility towards feminists. It positions feminism not merely as a social or political movement but as an antithetical force to the nationalistic and masculine ideals deeply ingrained in the Chinese collective memory.

4.2.3. The Made-in-China Emotional Public of Male Victims and the Alternative Right's Illegalisation of Feminism

"Therefore, it is no longer necessary to hold any expectations for the tower. As the saying goes, the child that makes trouble has milk to eat, and they have the value of the united front, whereas we are tacitly regarded as not having any because we are tacitly regarded as not making trouble, and if we do make trouble, it can be suppressed at once. Therefore, even if it is the Zhu Jun, it can be easily asked to submit to the overall situation, and they are the beneficiaries of the overall situation. No more expectations and hopes. Hold your wallet, don't be a provider; learn from their de-responsibility, you are a human being first and foremost, first and foremost you are yourself, and secondly you are a man, and you don't pay attention to the definitions that they give you, because men don't need to be defined. Believe me, more and more ridiculous things will follow, from the universities, to the society, to the law, just laugh at it. Don't worry, life will find a way out, and when it does, no one will be able to claim innocence. " #Zhu Jun Withdraws Lawsuit#25th September 2021

Scholarly examination of the cosmic discourse of China's alternative right is still in a relatively early stage, but this does not mean that the alternative right is unique to the West (Yang & Fang, 2023). In the discuss of Xianzi and Zhu Jun's case, phrases like 'no need to hold on to expectations and hopes' and 'you are yourself, and secondly you are a man' not only convey the perceived powerlessness and hostility among Chinese men towards gender politics but also reflect a broader societal context where traditional gender roles are being questioned. This discourse signifies a struggle within the male identity in modern China, framing men as victims in a rapidly changing social landscape.

In this case, Chinese men are portrayed as having completely lost their basic human rights, which hints at the brewing of alternative right-wing discourse in Chinese society. While alternative right-wing groups are often viewed as a Western phenomenon, characterized by an ideology of inequality and rejection of others' values (Heitmeyer, 2003), in the Chinese context, these groups adapt and reinterpret these ideologies within a local framework. By aligning anti-feminism with anti-Western sentiment, Chinese alternative right-wing discourse not only borrows from but also distinctly diverges from its Western counterparts, embedding its rhetoric in the unique political and cultural milieu of China. This rejection is centred on a culture and ideology that opposes liberalism and egalitarianism and rejects the value of vulnerable groups (Yang & Fang, 2023). Its total rejection of feminism and modern gender politics signals the internalisation of its hostility to male victim narratives and the feminist movement. While this alternative right-wing group in China is similar to its Western counterparts in some respects, its core characteristics and drivers are distinctly local.

Firstly, the anti-feminist alternative right discourse in China is framed as a form of anti-Westernism. As mentioned earlier, within this frame, feminism is seen as a tool for Western forces to infiltrate China, which coincides with the party-state's agenda of top-down state nationalism. Anti-feminist/anti-Westernist nationalism is a tool for the party-state to maintain its authoritarian system (Song, 2010). Emotional mobilisation has been at the

heart of the CCP's ideology since the Maoist era, and this has manifested itself in the digital age in the official media's control of the political agenda and the reinforcement of nationalism (Perry, 2002). Similar to Western nationalism, digital nationalism in China is mainly popular among male internet users and influenced by political gender discourse (Repnikova & Fang, 2018). 'Thus, Chinese digital nationalism's circling of masculinity directly shapes its anti-feminist/westernist undertones, which simultaneously shapes the construction of gender politics in parts of the Chinese internet ecology.' The statement 'even if it is the Zhu Jun, he can be easily asked to submit to the overall situation' underscores a significant shift in the perception of traditional masculine ideals in China. This portrayal of Zhu Jun, a scholar, as a figure of regret, reflects a deeper discourse that challenges and reevaluates the long-held notions of masculinity. It symbolizes a broader societal introspection about male roles and expectations in the contemporary socio-political climate.

In addition, in the context of neoliberalism, the new image of the successful businessman - "big money" - has filled Chinese popular culture (Song, 2010). As a collective imagination and projection, they express the basic male anxiety triggered by the profound changes in social power relations." The hypothetical scenarios of "stop being a provider" reflect men's anxieties about modern gender relations and social expectations post-reform and opening-up China, the "post-China period", the turn towards individualism and the marketisation of the economy have led to the social hegemony of men encoding the ideal of masculinity, thus redefining the concept of "wu 武" in the traditional economic sense (Peng et al., 2023). This also changes the traditional notion of the "wen and wu" as symbolising not only the full range of cultural and social capital, but also the success of the economic capital gained. But at the same time, the intensification of social stratification contradicts the government's promise of building a communist state (Yang, 2010). Interestingly, since the 1990s, the male crisis has increasingly intertwined with wedding norms, where men are expected to purchase property and assume the role of economic provider for marriage eligibility. The escalating real estate prices have not only intensified economic pressures but have also become a critical element in the discourse on gender politics in China. These mounting financial demands, tied to marriage norms, are frequently cited in narratives that portray Chinese men as economically burdened and socially victimized. This discourse leverages economic challenges to legitimize anti-feminist sentiments, framing the struggle for gender equality as an additional threat to the traditional male role as a provider. This has led to different (and mistaken) perceptions of gender inequality among women and men in post-reform China, stemming from their distinct experiences with gender power relations (Meng and Huang, 2017). Concurrently, this period has seen a growing voice of misogyny. Similar to their Western counterparts (Banet-Weiser, 2018), these misogynistic voices often manifest as strong resistance to feminism, reflecting the anxiety of male groups about their threatened dominance in socio-economic spheres (Peng et al., 2020)

In this digital nationalism, authority figures are often invoked to legitimize male anxieties in a neoliberal context, deepening the inclination towards alternative right-wing discourses.

This rhetoric strategically employs moral legitimization, portraying these anxieties as justifiable responses to perceived threats against traditional gender roles. "The extremism narratives of 'no one will be able to claim innocence' unleash alternative right-wing discourses' mechanisms for explaining and amplifying male self-anxiety and perceptions of inequality in gender relations. These narratives leverage instrumental rationality, framing extreme reactions to modern gender politics as logical outcomes of social and cultural tensions. They are mythologized to resonate deeply with traditional values, further legitimizing the alternative right-wing perspective. In addition, as the line between misogyny and anti-feminism has become increasingly blurred, the new generation of anti-feminists often do not distinguish between feminists and women (Ging, 2019). Together, these factors have constructed an anti-feminist alternative right-wing discourse in China that is not only based on opposition to gender-specific political values, but at the same time is deeply rooted in men's socio-economic status and identity crisis. This has laid a huge potential for a gender-political schism in Chinese society, where gender-oppositional narratives will continue to spread. This type of narrative is characterised by a high emphasis on the "physical confrontation" of the "wu".

It is worth emphasising that this creative alternative right-wing narrative exists alongside pro-regime narratives, creating a potential tension with authoritarian rule. So even pro-regime alternative right-wing groups may express critical tendencies towards the regime. This seemingly contradictory attitude is in fact a reflection of the complex social dynamics under authoritarian politics and information management strategies. During the Xianzi and Zhu Jun's trial, the discussion of public opinion on the Internet triggered the authoritarian regime's "information dilemma" (Göbel, 2013) response mechanism. Authoritarian states, on the one hand, hope benefit economically and socially from the flow of information, but are threatened. On the other hand, the flow of information could pose a potential threat to the party-state regime, even though these threats may not be directly oppositional to the system.

For example, "There is no need to expect anything from the tower anymore" expresses a feeling of disappointment and anger towards the regime. The term "tower" originally existed as a term for MOBA games, but was later used as a replacement term to describe "censorship" or "the powers that be" (CHINA DIGITAL SPACE, 2022), and "rushing the tower" has been described as an act of netizens fighting against censorship within China's Internet firewalls, which has gradually been extended to mean taking a major risk against the powers that be. It is worth noting that the rhetoric of the 'tower' is clearly a response to the alternative rhetoric used against authoritarian regimes under the dilemma of information scarcity and platform-based censorship. At the same time, the "tower" creates a bloody and brutal image in the context of war as a prop for the scene of "wu" domination in the war narrative.

Disappointment with the "towers" reveals frustration and anger with the authoritarian system, and although the "towers" are often seen by alternative right groups as symbols of protection and support, this support can quickly turn into criticism and opposition when they feel neglected or unfairly treated by the regime. These attitudinal shifts deepen the

reality that alternative right groups feel marginalised and neglected by authoritarian regimes. They may perceive the regime as being more inclined to support groups that will "make trouble" and neglect those who are perceived as "not making trouble". This feeling is reinforced, especially when they see that figures like Zhu Jun may also be forced to "obey the big picture", from which they feel excluded. Against this backdrop, alternative right-wing discourse may begin to move away from blind support for the regime and instead criticise some of its practices. Such a shift reveals a deep-seated sense of dissatisfaction and frustration, often stemming from the perceived failure of the regime to uphold their interests or values.

In the discourse of alternative right-wing narratives, a compelling aspect is the exposure and explicit identification of the party-state's 'Leviathan' entity. Despite this revelation, these discourses predominantly shift their focus towards critiques of feminist movements. The discourse posits that 'the child who cries out is the one who is fed,' implying that feminists are perceived as having strategic value in united front tactics, whereas men are implicitly considered devoid of such value due to their presumed quietude and ease of suppression. This rhetoric objectifies feminists through instrumental rationality, using them as strategic tools in united front tactics, while casting men as overlooked entities. This narrative uses moral legitimation to portray men's marginalization as a moral failing of the current socio-political system, invoking a mythologized view of gender roles. The axiom 'the child who cries out is the one who is fed' serves as a stark representation of the paternalistic and monopolistic governance inherent in authoritarian regimes, as internalized within these narratives. Any wisdom of the 'Wen-Wu' must submit to authoritarianism. This paradoxical scenario suggests a rare instance of perceived equality between men and feminists, albeit under the overarching control of a more dominant state apparatus.

Consequently, the decline of a male temperament imbued with a 'pathetic' aesthetic is manifested through a metaphorical 'self-emasculation,' leading to a pronounced and despairing dismissal of feminist entities. This dynamic underscoring a nuanced interplay between gender politics and state power, revealing the complex undercurrents of societal discourse in authoritarian contexts.

4.2.4. Summary

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the complex of how these anti-feminist narratives, deeply embedded in Chinese cultural and political landscapes, are distinct yet interconnected with global anti-feminist trends in Xianzi and Zhu Jun's case. The use of the 'wen-wu' paradigm offers a unique lens to understand the rationalization of attacks on feminism and their alignment with broader authoritarian and cultural themes in China.

The case studies demonstrate the intricate connections between anti-feminist movements, the legitimization of authoritarian regimes, and traditional Chinese culture. Zhu Jun's portrayal, despite allegations of misconduct, reflects the deep-rooted patriarchal values and the revered 'scholar-official' concept in modern China. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the intertwinement of anti-feminism with nationalism and post-truth values

revealing how feminism is often stigmatized as a Western influence, with a resultant rise in nationalistic and masculine 'wu' sentiments. These discourses internalize nationalism as a theme of "political correctness" and use it to attack feminism.

The digital age has further complicated this scenario, with Chinese nationalism, particularly among male internet users, fueling both anti-feminist and anti-Western sentiments. This has fortified the party-state's authoritarian grip and widened the gender-political divide in Chinese society.

Thus, while drawing elements from Western counterparts, the anti-feminist right-wing discourse in China is uniquely shaped by local contexts, framing feminism as contrary to nationalistic and masculine ideals. This discourse, with its focus on 'physical confrontation' 'wu', coexists with pro-regime narratives, illustrating the nuanced dynamics under Chinese authoritarian politics.

Overall, the study underscores the multifaceted nature of anti-feminist discourses in China and their relation to gender politics, state power, and societal norms, providing insights into the complexities of understanding gender politics in the authoritarian Chinese context.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Overview of Findings

The whole study is based on the discussion discourse of Strings and Zhu Jun on the microblogging platform as a background, and specifically examines the voices against the #MeToo movement. Data was collected from 2018-2013 on Weibo throughout the entirety of Xianzi's case with Zhu Jun. Through my findings I reconfirm the Weibo platform's potentially tendentious focus on and positive affective attitudes towards Zhu Jun, which is in line with academic observations of Weibo censorship mechanisms and demonstrates the unwelcoming nature of the #MeToo movement on social media. In these five years, String has grown from an obscure girl to a feminist activist, but has also been subjected to the abuse and attacks that continue to this day because of it. Zhu Jun has returned to CCTV and continues his work.

Also during these five years, attacks based on opposition to feminism have cunningly blocked the feminist agenda in a more diverse and intersectional way. Similar to the international wave of movements against digital feminism, the development of social platforms has shaped today's activism in a decentred way. But at the same time, polarising discourses are being produced simultaneously and rapidly shaping the entire global picture of digital opposition to feminism. The blurred line between misogyny and anti-feminism has led to varying degrees of personal attacks on those involved in #MeToo, deepened by the misogyny of China's Confucian tradition. The advent of the post-truth era resonates with the nationalism of the "East-meets-West" dichotomy in China's post-colonial context, which produces politically correct discourses that consider "non-Chinese" values to be an attempt to dismantle the Chinese system and state. The reshaping of masculinity as a result of the party-state's "national shame" has created a general anxiety among men in the context of neoliberalism, and has gradually polarised the opposition to feminism, producing not only a cross-cultural public of male emotions, but also a persistent made-in-China alternative right-wing tendency. This, in turn, has become intertwined with authoritarian rule. Anti-feminist discourses are at the centre of different political, economic and cultural changes, and are entangled with different power dynamics.

5.2. Limitations of the Research

5.2.1. Differences between Online Discourse and Real-World Views

Although online discourse can provide insights into public opinion, it does not necessarily represent the views of all groups comprehensively. Future research needs to explore further the intersections of online and offline discourse and conduct more comprehensive platform analyses to gain a broader perspective.

5.2.2. Assumption of Masculine Traits in Discourse

In analyzing Weibo data, this study has operated under the assumption that the discourse exhibits masculine traits due to the inability to confirm the gender of users. While acknowledging this as a limitation, it is important to note that gender roles and perceptions are complex and multifaceted. The study recognizes the diversity of voices and viewpoints, including those of women who may uphold patriarchal norms. This assumption about gender representation in the discourse is a necessary methodological decision, given the constraints of the data. Future research should aim to develop more nuanced methods for understanding the intricate role of gender in social media discourse.

5.2.3. Summary

This study's exploration of the #MeToo movement's opposition strategies on Weibo, while insightful, is limited by its focus on digital discourse, potentially overlooking the resilience of the feminist movement in China. The reliance on Weibo data means grappling with platform censorship and content biases, which could limit the representativeness of the findings. The gender-centric analysis, rooted in the "Wen-Wu" paradigm, is a deliberate choice to address gender dynamics in anti-feminist rhetoric, but it may not capture the full spectrum of perspectives due to the complexities of gender identification on social media. Additionally, the difference between online and offline discourse is acknowledged, suggesting the need for more comprehensive research that bridges these realms. Future studies should aim to broaden the scope, including diverse platforms and a more nuanced understanding of gender roles in the discourse.

5.3. More Insights to Future

The interplay of global and local forces within anti-feminist dialogue not only hinders activism and cements misogyny in China but also signals the rise of male-centric sentiments that could escalate gender conflicts and spur a form of gender-based violence. This ambiguity in China's alternative right, diverging from typical authoritarian alignment, demands attention from feminists and activists seeking avenues for engagement in a subdued civic environment. The issue's complexity underlines the ongoing need to embed intersectionality more deeply in scholarly discussions on gender equality. Moreover, I advocate for reevaluating indigenous frameworks like 'Wen-Wu' to enrich theoretical understanding and invigorate local discourse.

Given the study's constraints, future research should broaden the analysis of anti-feminist narratives across media forms and enhance both quantitative and qualitative methods. A more detailed examination of intersectionality concerning sexuality/gender, class, age, and

region will offer a sharper insight into the power dynamics driving today's anti-feminist rhetoric.

5.4. Conclusion

In summary, this study revisits the anti-feminist discourse on Weibo regarding the Xianzi-Zhu Jun case, highlighting a platform bias towards Zhu Jun and the challenges faced by the #MeToo movement in China. Over five years, the study observes a polarization of gender issues, but the discourse against feminism has become increasingly pluralistic. However, the research has limitations, including its reliance on online discourse, which may not fully represent all viewpoints due to Weibo's censorship and content biases. Additionally, the assumption of masculine traits in the discourse, rooted in the "Wen-Wu" paradigm, might overlook the complexities of gender identification on social media. Future research should broaden its scope beyond digital platforms and incorporate a more nuanced understanding of gender roles. Deepening the intersectionality analysis will more accurately reflect the underlying dynamics in today's anti-feminist agenda.

Appendix

Name	Topics
Zhu Jun	1. Zhu Jun Withdraws Lawsuit 2. Zhu Jun Wins Case 3. Zhu Jun Wins on Second Appeal 4. Zhu Jun's Second Appeal Victory 5. Evidence Exchange in Zhu Jun's Defamation Case 6. Zhu Jun's Rights of Reputation Dispute Case 7. Zhu Jun Accused of Sexual Harassment Case 8. Zhu Jun's Sexual Harassment Case 9. The Zhu Jun Case 10. Zhu Jun's First Response to Sexual Harassment 11. Ironclad Evidence of Zhu Jun's Sexual Harassment 12. Zhu Jun Denies Sexual Harassment 13. The Final Outcome of Zhu Jun's Sexual Harassment Case 14. Progress in Zhu Jun's Molestation Case Involving a Female Intern 15. Zhu Jun Responds to Sexual Harassment Incident 16. Zhu Jun Returns to Work at CCTV 17. Zhu Jun Returns to CCTV After Four Years 18. Zhu Jun's Return to CCTV After 4 Years 19. Zhu Jun Returns to Work at CCTV After Four Years 20. Zhu Jun is Back at CCTV 21. Zhu Jun's Selfie on the Way to Work at CCTV 22. Zhu Jun's Selfie at CCTV 23. Art Life Zhu Jun 24. Zhu Jun's Comeback 25. Support for Zhu Jun's Comeback 26. Teacher Zhu Jun, We Will Always Support You 27. Zhu Jun's First Response 28. Statement from Zhu Jun's Lawyer 29. Zhu Jun's Wife's Support 30. Yan Weiwen¹¹ Testifies for Zhu Jun 31. Yan Weiwen Provides Proof for Zhu Jun 32. Apologies to Zhu Jun 33. Zhu Jun's Selfie on His Way to CCTV

¹¹ Yan Weiwen: Had been thought by String to have been in and out of the dressing room where Zhu Jun was when he sexually harassed her. This was later mistakenly attributed to another person, Yu Junjian. <https://weibo.com/6640656158/JzLcXy4dl>

	34. Zhu Jun Taking Pulse Again 35. Zhu Jun Did Not Appear
Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan	1. Xianzi Banned from Speaking for One Year 2. Xianzi Suspected of Having Delusional Disorder 3. Xianzi Discusses Sexual Assault Case 4. Zhou Xiaoxuan 5. Who is the Leader of Zhou Xiaoxuan's Father
Zhu Jun & Xianzi/Mai Shao/Mai Shao Student Student	6. Zhu Jun Sues Mai Shao Students and Xianzi 7. Xianzi's Sexual Harassment Case Against Zhu Jun 8. Zhu Jun and Xianzi Sexual Harassment Case 9. First Trial Verdict of Xianzi's Case Against Zhu Jun 10. Xianzi Sues Zhu Jun 11. Xianzi Accuses Zhu Jun 12. Xianzi Loses Sexual Harassment Case Against Zhu Jun 13. Zhu Jun's First Response to Xianzi's Sexual Harassment Case 14. Zhu Jun Claims He Never Touched Xianzi at All 15. Xianzi Accuses Zhu Jun on BBC 16. Xuanzi and Zhu Jun 17. Zhu Jun and Xianzi 18. Zhou Xiaoxuan Defamation Case Against Zhu Jun
Mai Shao/Mai Shao Student	1. Mai Shao Student 2. Mai Shao 3. Mai Shao Student Comes Out to Apologize 4. Mai Shao Student Blacklists

Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan & Mai Shao/Mai Shao Student	1. Xianzi and Mai Shao Student Sued 2. Xianzi Mai Shao 3. Xuanzi and Mai Shao Student Sued
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[Table 1: Themes categorized by names](#)

Category	Description	Number of Topics
Zhu Jun	Topics exclusively related to "Zhu Jun"	35
Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan	Topics exclusively related to "Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan"	5
Zhu Jun & Xianzi	Topics mentioning both "Zhu Jun" and "Xianzi" directly	18
Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue	Topics exclusively related to "Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue"	4
Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan & Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue	Topics mentioning both "Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan" and "Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue" directly	3
Mai Shao Tongxue (Real Name)	Topics related to the real name of "Mai Shao Tongxue"	0

[Table 2 - Comparison of topic data 1](#)

Topic Category	Description	Number of Topics
Zhu Jun Only	Legal procedures and case progress	10
	Personal responses and public reactions	14
	Career and public image descriptions	11
	Explicit support for Zhu Jun	7
	Explicit opposition to Zhu Jun	1
Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan Only	Legal procedures and case progress	0
	Personal responses and public reactions	3
	Related characters and background info	2
	Explicit support for Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan	0

	Explicit opposition to Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan	2
Zhu Jun & Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan	Legal procedures and case progress	8
	Personal responses and public reactions	3
	Related characters and background info	2
	Public judgments about the parties	0
Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue Only	Legal procedures and case progress	0
	Personal responses and public reactions	2
	Related characters and background info	1
	Explicit opposition to Mai Shao/Mai Shao Tongxue	1
Xianzi/Zhou Xiaoxuan & Mai Shao/Mai Shao Student	Legal procedures and case progress	2
	Related characters and background info	1
	Public judgments about the parties	0

[Table 3 - Comparison of topic data 2](#)

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